

and is leaving all of its options open as a possible satellite broadcaster. "We're free agents but must be careful not to spread our money too freely," explains Roger Miron, sales director for Thames Television. "We provide shows crucial to the ITV's current schedule. Our core business will be production and distribution, and we're negotiating long-term agreements with the network."

Far from bitter about Thames's fall from grace, Miron says these are dangerous times for UK commercial broadcasting. "There's no doubt that the ITV companies are going to be strapped for cash; two or three companies could go belly up in a short time."

According to LWT International Managing Director Sydney Perry, pay TV is a force to be reckoned with, but the ITV network, despite its current disorientation, can still hold its own. "ITV is going to be in the ascendency for some time still," Perry predicts, "at least until the turn of the century."

The more mature Scandinavian television scene is also in the midst of a rapid thaw; with three new private broadcast licenses awarded, entrepreneurs such as Scandinavian Broadcasting System's Harry Sloan see enormous potential in a relatively untapped TV advertising market.

"Scandinavia is the last part of western Europe to develop its TV ad market," says Sloan, advertising American. "Average European TV ad take is 20%-30%, but in Scandinavia it averages only 5%; the next two to three years will be key to getting into this market, with new commercial channels coming on air," continued Sloan.

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Americans may be discovering this year that Europe is not an El Dorado. The market is still fairly raw, with few commercial channels making money. But pay TV is moving fast, and the rush to develop new revenue streams is becoming an increasingly important occupation among producers/distributors as well as broadcasters. There may yet be more cannibalization of the television market as recession wears down even the heartiest budgets, but few doubt the ultimate potential of a more savvy European television market. ■

DEALING IN MONTE CARLO

By Meredith Amdur, European correspondent

Format providers continue to turn successful deals internationally, especially in tight economic times and increasingly competitive young markets. Fremantle, a leading game show format seller, now claims European versions of such popular shows as *Wheel of Fortune*, *The Dating Game* and *Family Feud* in all major European territories. Says Fremantle's Doug Gluck: "Game shows make commercial sense in an audience-driven, low-cost, competitive market... The shows come with a proven track record and offer the lowest production costs you can get." Poland may be next on the game show trail.

American Gladiators is now throwing its weight around Europe. The UK's London Weekend Television (LWT) is the latest European broadcaster to acquire rights to the Samuel Goldwyn Television series. Germany (RTL plus) Italy (Rai Uno), Spain (Antena 3) and Holland have already bought the show. Production of the British version is scheduled to begin in July. The rough-and-tumble-competition show is also on its way to Japan and Mexico.

Westinghouse Broadcasting International and Mitsubishi announced a production/distribution agreement whereby Mitsubishi will become the exclusive representative of Westinghouse's program catalog in Japan. The companies also hope to develop the association to include co-productions for worldwide distribution and production in high-definition television co-production.

Public television, one of the few routes into the U.S. market for many European products, is taking on its own more entrepreneurial spirit. Public Television International, the two-year-old centralized distribution body for many PBS shows, is preparing for a busy market year with high expectations for its shows, *Columbus and the Age of Discovery*, *Childhood* and *LBJ*. PTI recently announced its appointment as Yorkshire Television's US representative for PBS syndication sales.

KirchGroup-owned BetaFilm has high hopes for one of the most ambi-

tious TV series launches of the market, *Young Indiana Jones*. The project was produced by Lucasfilm for ABC, Paramount Television and BetaFilm in association with Rai Uno, TF1, Antena 3 and ORF. Paramount Pictures (Television) VP Joseph Lucas says he expects sales in all markets, with the highest prices yet paid for a one-hour series. Seventeen hours have been shot initially, and a two-hour pilot will be aired on ABC March 1.

According to BetaFilm spokesperson Michaela Niemeyer, the project was shot in 11 different countries and was budgeted at roughly \$1.6 million per episode. Such big-budget co-financing ventures are becoming standard procedure in the production of major TV series, and Beta's continental Europe distribution rights are valuable.

Silvio Berlusconi Communications (SBC) production arm Reteitalia also confirmed its new affiliation with MGM to co-produce a two-hour prime time series pilot for CBS. Tentatively titled *Deadly*, the action will center on the adventures of an American woman working for an anti-terrorist organization in Europe.

According to SBC President and CEO Carlo Bernasconi, the production alliance, the first with a U.S. major studio for Reteitalia, validates SBC's television production strategy and goals, and adds a comprehensive dimension to international TV co-productions.

Two Australian soaps are headed for UK prime time early this spring via satellite pay-service BSkyB. Portland Global concluded a long-term deal with Sky One for the half-hour series *E Street*, which grabs a 32 share targeted at young adult viewers in Australia. The series was produced for Network 10 in Australia by Westside Television; the package is valued at approximately \$15 million.

Beyond Distribution also closed a deal with Sky on the controversial adult drama series *Chances*. The show will also be transmitted on the general entertainment channel Sky One beginning in early March. The two acquisitions will be British debuts of highly popular Australian soaps which follow the successful path of *Neighbors* and *Home and Away*, which currently air on UK terrestrial channels. ■